

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT PARIS 01156 ACTION SECSTATE DATED JAN 13:

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SUBJECT: ITALIAN SITUATION-CONSULTATIONS WITH THE
ALLIES

REF: A) STATE 8959

B) PARIS 902

1. I HAVE TAKEN UP QUESTIONS RELATING TO ITALIAN
SITUATION WITH ELYSEE SECRETARY GENERAL FRANCOIS-
PONCET. HE TOLD ME THAT IN GISCARD'S ABSENCE IN
ABIDJAN, HE COULD NOT GIVE US AN AUTHORITATIVE
DEFINITION OF GISCARD'S CURRENT ANALYSIS OF ITALIAN
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SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 010504

SITUATION, REACTION TO THE US STATEMENT, OR
HIS JUDGEMENT OF WHAT ACTIONS IF ANY FRENCH THEMSELVES
MIGHT BE ABLE TO TAKE. CERTAINLY, GISCARD WAS SERIOUSLY
CONCERNED OVER THE RECENT TURN OF EVENTS IN ROME.
PROBABLY, FRANCOIS-PONCET THOUGHT, HE SHARED THE US
APPRECIATION THAT THE SITUATION WAS SERIOUS.
OBVIOUSLY, FRANCOIS-PONCET ASSURED ME, ITALY WOULD BE

ONE OF THE FIRST, IF NOT THE FIRST ISSUE, TO WHICH GISCARD WILL TURN HIS ATTENTION ON HIS RETURN EARLY NEXT WEEK. FRANCOIS-PONCET THEREFORE URGED ME TO WAIT UNTIL THEN BEFORE PURSUING ISSUE FURTHER. IN THE MEANTIME, HE HINTED BROADLY WE SHOULD NOT PAY TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO OTHERS IN GOF -- AN EVIDENT ALLUSION TO THE QUAI D'ORSAY -- WHO THOUGHT THAT ITALY WAS A "SPECIAL CASE".

2. FRANCOIS-PONCET'S PRUDENT, MODESTLY ENCOURAGING REACTION HAS TO BE READ AGAINST INCREASING EVIDENCE OF A SPLIT IN FRENCH RANKS ON ITALY. SEVERAL OTHER CONVERSATIONS IN LAST TWENTY FOUR HOURS HAVE CONFIRMED OUR IMPRESSION (REF B) THAT SUBSTANTIAL DISAGREEMENT CONTINUES BETWEEN FRENCH AMBASSADOR PUAUX IN ROME AND MEMBERS OF THE ELYSEE STAFF ON THE ONE HAND (WHO SUBSTANTIALLY AGREE THAT THE SITUATION IN ROME IS SERIOUS AND SLIPPING FAST) AND MOST ECHELONS AT THE QUAI ON THE OTHER. LATTER CONSIDER THAT WE ARE BEING TOO ALARMIST, SINCE THERE IS NO REAL RISK OF EARLY PCI PARTICIPATION IN GOI (IGNORING DANGERS OF OTHER CONCESSIONS WHICH MIGHT BE MADE); AND THAT THE US STATEMENT WILL THEREFORE BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, SINCE IT WILL STIFFEN ITALIAN POLITICAL POSITIONS AND SO REMOVE THE FLEXIBILITY NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE ANOTHER COMPROMISE.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 010504

3. THIS WAS THE THRUST OF EUROPEAN DIRECTOR ANDREANI'S REMARKS YESTERDAY TO POL COUNSELOR. THE SAME LINE IN MORE EMOTIONAL TERMS WAS LATER REFLECTED BY THE ITALIAN DESK TO EMBOFF. IT WAS ALSO THE POINT OF A TELEGRAM ALONG ABOVE LINES TO WASHINGTON (WHICH QUAI SECGEN SOUTOU AUTHORIZED IN LAST TWO DAYS AND WHICH EMBOFF HAD READ TO HIM) IN WHICH QUAI MADE SURE THAT ITS PEOPLE IN WASHINGTON WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT ACCEPT PUAUX'S VIEW, AS APPARENTLY REFLECTED TO AMBASSADOR GARDNER, THAT SITUATION WAS SERIOUS AND THAT A US ACTION WAS DESIRABLE.

4. ELYSEE INTERNATIONAL STAFF SOURCE TODAY TOLD EMBOFF IN STRICT CONFIDENCE, THAT GISCARD ON THE OTHER HAND "GREATLY VALUED" PUAUX'S VIEWS, WHILE QUAI WAS RUNNING SCARED FOR FEAR OF POLITICAL CONTROVERSY OVER US INTERVENTION BEFORE FRENCH ELECTION.

5. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND WE WERE FORTUNATE IN MODERATE TONE OF PUBLIC REPLY JUST MADE BY QUAI TO

A QUESTION ON THE US STATEMENT ON ITALY - WHICH EVIDENTLY REFLECTS A CAREFUL COMPROMISE. SPOKESMAN SAID THAT IT WAS NOT ABNORMAL THAT THE US, IN ITS ROLE AS AN ALLY, EXPRESSES A VIEW ON THE POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION OF COMMUNISTS IN WESTERN GOVERNMENTS. THE US STATEMENT, THE SPOKESMAN CONTINUED, CLEARLY RECOGNIZES THE SOVERIGNTY OF THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED, AND THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAD, WHILE IN FRANCE, ABSTAINED FROM ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THIS QUESTION.

6. I ASSUME QUAI'S CONSTRUCTIVE PUBLIC ANSWER REFLECTS FRANCOIS-PONCET'S VIEW, SINCE HE ALSO HINTED BROADLY IN SPEAKING TO ME THAT FRANCE HAD "HAD TO OBJECT" TO SUCH STATEMENTS WHEN DIRECTED AT FRANCE,
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 010504

BUT MIGHT "SEE SOME MERIT" IN THEM WHEN DIRECTED" AT OTHERS".

7. I WOULD ALSO ASSUME, THEREFORE, THAT GISCARD WILL NOT OBJECT TO OUR STATEMENT WHEN HE RETURNS; ALTHOUGH HE MAY WELL FEEL THAT FRANCE'S OWN CAPACITY TO HELP IN ITALY WILL BE LIMITED. IN PLACE OF THE PROJECTED ANDREOTTI VISIT TO PARIS, WHICH WAS RECENTLY CANCELLED, HE MAY WELL, I WOULD EXPECT, BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER THE USEFULNESS OF OTHER VERY DISCRETE FRENCH WAYS OF AGAIN BOLSTERING THE DC LEADERSHIP'S SPINE AND ASSURANCE. HARTMAN UNQTE CHRISTOPHER

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